

Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47), Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam, issued the following statement on the East Sea dispute:

“Today, Secretary Gates called on nations to resolve the territorial dispute over the East Sea peacefully and without force or coercion. In July, Secretary Clinton addressed the ASEAN Regional Forum in Vietnam calling the dispute a diplomatic priority. Territorial disputes in the East Sea must be fairly resolved with all nations who claim parts of the sea including Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines.

“This must not be a unilateral process, but a multilateral one that brings all involved nations to the table. All nations, including China, must respect international law and avoid using violence or coercive measures to deny their neighbors' rights to the sea. The East Sea is a major means of international trade with significant implications for the economies of Southeast Asia, making a multilateral approach to this dispute even more necessary.

"A number of Vietnamese activists have been detained by the Government of Vietnam for speaking out to protect their country's right to the East Sea. I urge the government of Vietnam to support its citizens for their attempts to protect their country rather than punish them for exercising their right to free speech and expression. The voices of the Vietnamese people will only strengthen Vietnam's fight for access to this vital resource."